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General Assembly
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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 27 July 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to urgently draw your attention to the critical situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, due to Israel's endless provocations and illegal actions against the Palestinian people and their holy sites in Occupied East Jerusalem, particularly the Haram al-Sharif, which houses the Aqsa Mosque.

Again, we are witnessing the same provocative actions against the holy sites in Occupied East Jerusalem, by Israel, the occupying Power, which are further fuelling already high tensions and continuing to destabilize the fragile situation on the ground. In this regard, today, Israeli occupying forces violently stormed the Aqsa Mosque compound, firing tear gas and stun grenades at Muslim worshippers gathered for Friday prayers, injuring nearly 40 Palestinians, including two of the Waqf guards. In addition, Israeli occupying forces arrested six Palestinians. Moreover, Israel took yet an additional dangerous and condemnable action in which it sealed off the Aqsa Mosque with iron chains, preventing Palestinian worshippers from entering to worship, which led to confrontations between Israeli occupying forces and Muslim worshippers.

This dangerous escalation coincides with the first anniversary of the Aqsa Mosque protests of July 2017, when tens of thousands of Palestinians prayed outside the compound for early two weeks, protesting against the new metal detectors installed by the Israeli occupying authorities. The latest illegal measures taken today by the Israeli occupying forces represent a clear demonstration of Israel's persistent policy of violating the historic status quo of the holy sites of the City, which has only served to aggravate religious sensitivities and tensions on the ground. Israel, the occupying Power, must respect the historic status quo and the sacredness of the holy site and cease all actions that are inflaming the situation and that risk exacerbating heightened religious sensitivities with potentially grave consequences.

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Israeli closures and measures regarding the Aqsa Mosque compound should not be seen as isolated events, but rather as part of broader Israeli policies to alter the character, status and demographics of Occupied East Jerusalem and transform it into a Jewish-only city. As such, what is taking place today cannot be divorced from other illegal policies and practices being carried out by Israel throughout the City and the rest of the West Bank, including its construction and expansion of settlements, home demolitions, forced evictions and the displacement of Palestinian families. Nor can it be divorced from the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the adoption of the so-called "Jewish nation-state law", which aims to intensify Israel's colonization, segregation and discrimination regime in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

We recall that the international community has rightly never recognized Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem and considers it occupied territory. We further reiterate that all illegal Israeli actions at the Haram al-Sharif and throughout the rest of Occupied East Jerusalem constitute violations of international law, including the numerous relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and General Assembly resolutions, including resolution ES-10/19, calling for a cessation of all policies and measures aimed at altering the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and calling for respect by the occupying Power of its obligations under international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, under which such actions are explicitly prohibited.

We therefore call upon the international community to condemn these illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and to firmly demand that it immediately cease all measures and provocations that are violating the status quo of the holy sites of the City. Israel, the occupying Power, must respect the right of the Palestinian people to freely access the compound and the right of Muslims to worship at the compound without any interference whatsoever.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 642 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 17 July (A/ES-10/791-S/2018/710), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations